



U.S. Department
of Transportation
**Federal Transit
Administration**

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September 18, 2006

Mayor Dannel P. Malloy
Stamford Government Center
888 Washington Boulevard
Stamford, CT 06904

Re: Stamford Urban Transitway Phase II Environmental Assessment
Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)

Dear Mayor Malloy:

Based upon a review of the environmental documentation submitted by the City of Stamford to this office, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) has issued the attached Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the Stamford Urban Transitway (SUT) Phase II Project.

The purpose of the SUT Phase II Project is to extend the benefits of the first phase of the Transitway (SUT Phase I) to residential and commercial areas in the eastern and northeastern sections of the City. The principal location of SUT Phase II, the Myrtle Avenue corridor, is the only direct connection between SUT Phase I and East Main Street (US Route 1), which is disadvantaged by limited lane capacity and poor traffic flow conditions. The SUT Phase II Project will extend curbside Bus/HOV lane operation from the eastern limits of the SUT Phase I to East Main Street for exclusive use of buses, vanpools, taxis, and other High Occupancy Vehicles (HOV) twenty four hours a day/seven days a week. Local and commuter buses will receive signal priority treatment at intersections and serve high amenity bus stops with real-time passenger information displays, thereby reducing rider trip times and anxiety. Improved Bus and HOV access between the Stamford Intermodal Transportation Center (SITC) and East Main Street (US Route 1) will help relieve congestion on local streets, provide fast, direct BRT-like levels of service in the Myrtle Avenue Corridor, and open neighborhoods south of I-95 to economic development.

Please be advised that in accordance with 23 CFR 771.121, the City of Stamford is required to transmit a copy of the FONSI to all affected Federal, State, and local governmental entities. In addition, under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, the FTA has determined that the SUT Phase II Project will have no effect on historic resources.

Please let me know if you have any questions regarding this matter. FTA looks forward to working with the City of Stamford on this important transit improvement initiative.

Sincerely,

Richard H. Doyle
Regional Administrator

Attachment

FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION REGION 1

Finding of No Significant Impact

Project: Stamford Urban Transitway Phase II (SUT Phase II)

Applicant: City of Stamford

Project Location: Stamford, Connecticut

Purpose and Need

The City of Stamford (City) has undertaken a multi-phase Stamford Urban Transitway (SUT) Project to expedite transit and High Occupant Vehicle (HOV) access to and from the Stamford Intermodal Transportation Center (SITC), the most heavily utilized mass transportation facility in the State of Connecticut, and open neighborhoods south of I-95 to economic development. SUT Phase I, scheduled for completion in fall 2008, consists of a direct one-mile busway facility connecting eastern and southeastern sections of the City to the SITC and downtown Stamford. The scope of Phase I, however, does not extend to US Route 1, the major east-west artery in the region, nor does it eliminate the existing inefficient and circuitous non-revenue bus travel. Consequently, SUT Phase I transportation benefits will have limited reach beyond the City to adjacent towns, including Darien and Norwalk. SUT Phase II would, however, extend the benefits of SUT Phase I from its current Elm Street terminus along Myrtle Avenue to East Main Street, thereby relieving congestion on local streets, and providing fast, direct BRT-like levels of service between the SITC and the Myrtle Avenue Corridor, and the Glenbrook, Cove, and Shippan neighborhoods of Stamford. Under SUT Phase II, local and commuter buses will operate along dedicated Bus/HOV lanes, receive signal priority treatment at intersections, and serve high amenity bus stops with real-time passenger information displays.

Alternatives Considered

The City of Stamford explored and evaluated five (5) different SUT Phase II Project alternatives, including alignment routing options. All the alternatives were directed towards using more efficient bus service to improve the transportation linkages to the heavily utilized SITC and enhancing the mobility of project area residents. The alternatives evaluated, included: (1) No Build; (2) Transportation System Management (TSM); (3) 5-Lane Build; (4) 4-Lane Build—Northwest Alignment; and (5) 4-Lane Build—Southeast Alignment. Due to constraints presented by the location of the Phase I facility, I-95 embankment, and the railroad right-of-way, each build alternative utilized the existing Myrtle Avenue corridor. Of the five (5) alternatives analyzed, only the 4-Lane Build—Northwest Alignment alternative met the project purpose and need. It was determined that the No Build alternative would lead to a further deterioration of the levels of service in the corridor and deter use of public transit and non-motorized modes. Without substantial transit infrastructure improvements, the TSM alternative failed to yield the desired result of a direct, dedicated transit link to the SITC. The 5-Lane Build alternative would have a much greater impact on property takings, land use, parking, and project costs as compared to that of a 4-lane alternative. Lastly, the 4-Lane Build—Southeast Alignment alternative was determined to have a greater impact on residential properties, utilities, parking, land use, and project cost when compared to the Northeast Alignment alternative.

Proposed Project

The SUT Phase II Project is an intermodal transportation project that will improve access to the SITC from eastern and northeastern sections of the City. SUT Phase II, which extends the Phase I Transitway for 3,000 feet along Myrtle Avenue to US Route 1, widens existing street segments in the Myrtle Avenue corridor. Additionally, SUT Phase II will include exclusive lanes for buses and other high occupancy vehicles linking directly to SUT Phase I and the SITC, signal prioritization for fixed route CTTRANSIT buses, high amenity bus stops/stations with quality shelters, street furniture and information kiosks, and bike lanes and sidewalks along the entire corridor. Bus priority signal treatments at intersections will give CTTRANSIT vehicles in revenue service instantaneous signal priority, reducing total average trip times, and lowering standard deviations amongst trips, thereby improving reliability for passengers. High-amenity bus stops in the corridor will include real-time passenger displays. The dedicated lanes will be for the exclusive use of buses and other HOV vehicles seven days per week/twenty-four hours per day. On-street parking will be prohibited along the corridor at all times so as not to interfere with the efficient use of the dedicated Bus/HOV lanes.

The City of Stamford and CTTRANSIT will update the *Stamford Urban Transitway Operations Plan* to reflect service commitments facilitated by the opening of the SUT Phase II. Similar to SUT Phase I, the City and CTTRANSIT are committed to providing regular service along the full Transitway at peak hour headways of ten (10) minutes or less, stopping at high-amenity bus stops at locations (to be identified), following broad community consultation. Both parties agree to extend commitments made for SUT Phase I to SUT Phase II with respect to stop amenities, displays, and signal priority treatments.

Agency Coordination and Public Opportunity to Comment

The SUT Phase II Environmental Assessment (EA) and Section 4(f) Evaluation was made available for public review on June 16, 2006. A public hearing and open house on the EA was held on July 13, 2006. The Public Hearing Notice was published in the *Connecticut Law Journal*, the *Stamford Advocate*, the *Norwalk Hour*, and in the Spanish Language newspaper, *La Voz*, fifteen (15) days in advance of the meeting. The information was also available on the City's website throughout the comment period, which ran through July 21, 2006 (i.e., 35-day public review period). According to sign-in sheets provided by the City, forty-four (44) individuals attended the July 13, 2006 public hearing and four (4) residents and business owners made oral comments. The City also received eleven (11) written comments, both in electronic and paper media, from residents and businesses owners, as well as from the Connecticut Department of Transportation, the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection, the Connecticut State Historic Preservation Office, and the United States Department of the Interior. As a result of comments received, the City has committed to: (1) reevaluating the location of a proposed bus stop in the corridor; (2) developing a Pest Control Plan in coordination with the City of Stamford Health Department; and (3) working with a property owner to reclassify a property as a partial take rather than a full take. All comments have been addressed and a copy of the comments and associated responses is included in the EA. A transcript of the entire Public Hearing is also included in the EA.

Determinations and Findings

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Finding

FTA served as the lead agency under NEPA for the project. The City of Stamford prepared the EA in compliance with NEPA, 42 U.S.C. Section 4321 et. seq., and with FTA's regulations, 23 CFR Part 771. FTA has made an independent evaluation of the EA. The EA discusses the potential impacts of the project so that FTA can determine whether significant adverse impacts (CEQ 1508.27) are probable. If such a determination were made, an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) would need to be prepared.

After reviewing the EA and supporting documents, including public comments and responses made thereof, the FTA finds under 23 CFR 771.121 that the proposed project, with the mitigation to which the City of Stamford has committed, will have no significant adverse impact on the environment. The record provides sufficient evidence and analysis for determining that an EIS is not required.

Federal Uniform Relocation Act Compliance

The Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970, as amended, ensure the fair and equitable treatment of persons whose real property is acquired or who are displaced as a result of a Federal or Federally-assisted project.

The City has identified eight (8) total property takings associated with project implementation, including ten (10) businesses and three (3) residential units that will require relocation. An additional sixty-seven (67) partial takes will also be required, but most, if not all, of these will not require relocation.

In accordance with Federal and State guidelines, the City of Stamford will pay fair market value for all parcels in private ownership that need to be acquired. A Property Acquisition Agency contracted by the City will assist in the relocation of displaced persons and businesses, ensuring the availability of adequate, decent, safe and sanitary housing on an open occupancy basis and at costs affordable to the displacees.

Section 106 Compliance

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, requires the review of federally assisted projects for impacts to districts, sites, buildings, structures and objects listed in, or eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. Federal agencies must coordinate with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and potentially affected Tribes to make this determination. The Advisory Council on Historic preservation (ACHP) has established procedures for the protection of historic and cultural properties in, or eligible for, the National Register (36 CFR Part 800).

In a letter dated June 21, 2006, the Connecticut State Historic Preservation Office affirmed that "the proposed undertaking will have no effect on historic, architectural, or archeological resources listed on or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places."

Model results for that intersection indicate that the maximum one (1) hour and eight (8) hour CO concentrations were well below the NAAQS. In a November 12, 2002 letter, Connecticut DEP subsequently noted that "CO air quality analysis for the project adequately demonstrates that standards will not be exceeded."

Hazardous Materials

The City has conducted a *Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (ESA)* of the Project area, which concluded that historic data identified possible soil and ground water quality impacts to properties along project corridor that warrant Phase II Environmental Site Assessments. Four (4) of these properties will require partial takes as part of the project design. Should further investigation or remediation be required, the City will conform to all relevant EPA guidelines. As part of the construction effort, a Health and Safety Plan will be developed and implemented to ensure that the potential for exposure to construction workers and other citizens living or working in the Project's proximity is minimized. All materials removed from the site will be disposed of in compliance with applicable laws and regulations.

Permits

The City of Stamford will be required to obtain all necessary permits, as documented in Section 8 of the EA, and approvals, prior to the construction of SUT Phase II Project.

Incorporation by Reference

The full text of the EA for the SUT Phase II, prepared by the City of Stamford and transmitted to FTA on August 15, 2006, is hereby incorporated by reference in this Finding of No Significant Impact.

Approved: Mary Beth Nell Date: 9/18/06
for Richard H. Doyle
Regional Administrator
FTA, Region I

Concur: Wendy A. Lee Date: 9/18/06
Wendy A. Lee
Regional Counsel